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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000801

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: BISHOPS SPEARHEAD DISCREET GOZ - MDC MEDIATION
INITIATIVE

REF: A. HARARE 540

[B](#). HARARE 222

Classified By: Political Officer Audu Besmer for reasons 1.5 b/d

Summary:

[1](#)1. (C) Three bishops in Manicaland, and one Archbishop in Bulawayo, are spearheading an effort to arrange talks between the GOZ and the MDC focused on resolving Zimbabwe's political crisis. They envision a depolarized, demilitarized Zimbabwe where the rule of law is upheld, but they are only seeking to establish common ground and points of contention between the GOZ and MDC as a starting point for talks. They have consulted with GOZ officials, MDC leadership, and South African government officials. Although this effort alone might be insufficient to forge a political settlement, a combination of this initiative with other elements of international and domestic pressure, might be enough to force Mugabe to the negotiating table. End Summary.

Bishops Draw up a Vision for Zimbabwe

[1](#)2. (C) In separate conversations with Poloff on April 16, the Bishop of the Anglican Church in Manicaland and President of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) Sebastian Bakare and Bishop Trevor Manhanga, President of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), revealed that together with Bishop Patrick Mutume of the Roman Catholic Church in Mutare, and President of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace and Catholic Archbishop of Bulawayo Pius Ncube they have drawn up a ten-point vision for Zimbabwe and are quietly approaching the President's office to arrange negotiations between ZANU-PF and the MDC. Though the Bishops did not provide a written copy of the vision statement, they reported that it calls for political depolarization, demilitarization, disbanding of the youth militia(s), non-partisan treatment within the courts, inclusiveness in the political process, and repeal of the draconian Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA).

Parties to Set Agenda

[1](#)3. (C) Bakare said they would not set the agenda for negotiations but rather seek to find common ground and points of contention as a starting point for the parties to move into substantive talks. Bakare said their initiative comes out of deep resentment within churches that the GOZ has prevented them from distributing food and other social services that they once did and could again provide. Bakare said their intent is to be an honest broker. They draw church members from both political parties and have a moral responsibility to use their good offices to resolve the crisis.

Increased Church Advocacy

[1](#)4. (C) Bakare said that in comparison to various church and church associations' public statements, for example the March 2003 Lenten Pastoral Letter by the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC) - a scathing attack on the GOZ for politicizing food distribution and access to justice, and for promoting political violence - this initiative was an additional dimension of church activism (Refs A, B).

Regional Connections

[1](#)5. (C) Bakare said that Anglican Archbishop of Capetown Njongonkulu Ndungane had offended local bishops during his February 2003 trip to Harare by not consulting with them beforehand. Instead his meetings and his public remarks suggested he had been taken in by Mugabe's charm and rhetoric. Ndungane's second visit in March was better, as he met with a broader spectrum of Zimbabwean society, including

church and civic groups, but according to Bakare, the damage was already done. Bakare acknowledged that - given the access Ndungane has been given to the President - it might be advantageous for the two initiatives to join, yet he still seemed personally offended by Ndungane's missteps. Manhanga believed that it would be important for them to join with Ndungane and suggested he could convince Bakare. Manhanga also said he had consulted with South African government officials, including Director-General in the Presidency Reverend Frank Chikane, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Aziz Pahad, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in Parliament Paulo Jordan and South African bishops. They intended to lobby more broadly within SADC - and with the Kenyan Government - to press for inter-party dialogue within Zimbabwe.

Likely Participants

16. (C) Bakare said their group consisted of roughly 10-12 Zimbabwean bishops from every denomination and locality. While they had been requesting a meeting with the President for a month now to start the process, they had already met with some GOZ officials and received indications that ZANU-PF spokesman and elder statesman Nathan Shamuyarira and Minister of Special Affairs and ZANU-PF National Chairman John Nkomo might be tapped to represent the GOZ in negotiations. On the MDC side, they have an open relationship with MDC President Morgan Tsvangirai and have also met Shadow Minister of Justice and MP David Coltart. Both are open to this initiative.

ZANU-PF Sincere?

17. (C) Asked whether they thought the GOZ would take negotiations seriously and why, Bakare said that they would, that hardship was now affecting even the families of Mugabe's inner circle who no longer deny the existence of a crisis privately. Manhanga said that travel bans and financial sanctions were also biting.

Comment:

18. (C) That the bishops have not yet succeeded in getting a meeting with President Mugabe does not bode well for the prospects for success of this initiative. However, the bishops' initiative can be one key element in growing international pressure on the Mugabe regime. Church pressure, tough nudging from Presidents Muluzi and Mbeki, travel bans and financial sanctions, and Zimbabwe's economic implosion might, in the end, be enough to force Mugabe to the negotiating table. End Comment.
SULLIVAN